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INTRODUCING THE NEW EMPLOYEE

BY CHARLES L. PEARSON,

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It is customary for most corporations to include among their assets an item for "good will," which is supposed to represent the value of what their customers think of them. But how much is it worth to a corporation to have the good will of its employes, based on mutual understanding and a spirit of coöperation? It has been conservatively estimated that it costs from upwards fifty dollars to break in a new employee. If a plant has the good will of its employes, how much of this expense can be saved by not having to break in so many new employees? The future may see the "good will" of the employees classed as an asset no less in importance than the good will of the customers.

The good will of the employees is not necessarily based on wages alone. Unless the working conditions also produce health, happiness, and an understanding of the spirit of the organization, a stable force cannot be maintained. These things are not, however, necessarily dependent upon so-called "welfare work," which too often smacks of paternalism.

A modern industrial plant is a very complex organization made up of many individuals, each one necessarily intent upon the duties and responsibilities demanded by modern efficiency in production. And what of the stranger who enters this hive of industry? Shall he drift in almost unnoticed, do his daily work for a time and drift out again unnoticed? Or is it possible to make him feel that he is to be treated as an individual human being and not as a machine, as one who has come to stay and who is of enough importance to be given some personal attention?

In the plant of the German-American Button Company at Rochester the proper introducing of new employees to personnel, policies, and social activities is a very important function of the labor bureau. It is the policy to develop personal relations and mutual understanding right from the start, to deal with the employee as an individual rather than as a "number."

Likely candidates are interviewed by members of the labor bureau and application records are made. Men interview the male applicants and a woman interviews the women applicants. A well equipped hospital is maintained, with a nurse in constant attendance, and all applicants considered desirable are required to pass a physical examination by the plant physician before acceptance.

Good health is an important factor and it is necessary that employes be physically fit for their tasks. To illustrate: the matching of colors or shades requires good eyesight and employes having weak eyes or who are color blind should not be assigned to this work.

If the applicant is approved by the physician, he is told by the interviewer that he has been accepted and is instructed when to report for work. The time designated is not the usual starting time of the factory, but some hour within the work period, the time set being dependent upon the number to be placed at work. When the new employe reports for work, he is not taken directly to his department but has another talk with the manager of the labor bureau. At this time the following points are explained:

1. Personnel.
2. Use of hospital, dispensary, and rest rooms.
3. Lunch room.
4. Hours of work.
5. Use of coat rooms.
6. Method and time of paying off.
7. Registration.
8. Rules regarding tardiness.
9. Earned vacation plan.
10. Reason for and value of rest periods.

The new employe is then taken to his department and introduced to his foreman and to the instructors who are to educate him in his duties. On the way to the department he is shown the nearest toilet room.

If the new employe plans to use the lunch room, arrangements are made by the labor bureau with an old employe to see that he gets to the lunch room all right and is introduced to others at the same table. The employment manager is responsible for seeing that this is done. Employes are not permitted to remain in departments during the lunch hour.

About two weeks after the new employe starts to work, he is sent for by the employment manager at a time agreed upon with the foreman. He is then given an opportunity to bring up any points concerning organization or activities that are not clear. This gives him an opportunity to make complaints regarding his treatment or relations with others.

At this interview some of the social and educational activities are also explained. The endeavor is to acquaint the new employe with the spirit of the organization and arouse his interest. The general topics explained at this time are:

1. Educational courses.
2. Library.
3. Suggestion system.
4. Use of park and recreation grounds.
5. Associated Recreation Clubs.
6. Progress Club.

These clubs are social, recreational and educational organizations controlled entirely by the employes.

Individual records are kept, showing the progress and development of the employe, covering earnings, attendance, department, suggestions made, and other items of a personal nature. These records are used in determining future advancement.

It may seem that all this is unjustified extravagance; but if such development of personal relations creates good will and mutual understanding, is it not worth while? The experience of this company indicates that it is.